

CAP AND GOWN DAY AT UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



...The New Education...

By ELBERT HUBBARD.

You will remember that we used to be told very often, "Children should be seen and not heard."

We know better now—let the babies talk. God bless them!

The healthy, active child is full of impressions, and that he should express himself is just as natural as for a bird to sing.

It is nature's way of giving growth—no one knows a thing for sure until he tells it to some one else.

We deepen impressions by recounting them, and to habitually suppress and repress the child when he wants to tell of the curious things he has seen, is to display a two by four.

Not long ago, on a horseback ride of 100 miles, or so, I came to an out-of-the-way "desertic school," such a one as you see every three miles all over New York State. This particular school house would not have attracted my attention especially, had I not noticed that nearly half the school was taken up with a garden and flower beds.

No house was near, and it was apparent that this garden was the work of the teacher and scholars.

Straightway I dismounted, tied my horse and walked into the school house.

The teacher was a man of middle age, a hunchback, and one of the rarest gentlest spirits I have ever met.

Have you ever noticed what an alert, receptive and beautiful soul is often housed in a misshapen body?

This man was modest and shy as a woman, and when I spoke of the flower beds, he half apologized for them, and tried to change the subject.

When, after a few moments he realized that my interest in his garden was something deeper than mere curiosity, he said, "I have been told that the best school is the one where the teacher and scholars are one."

"You see," he said, "in winter we have sixty or more pupils, but the school is small now. I thought I would try the plan of teaching out-of-doors half the time, and to keep the girls and boys busy, I just let each scholar have a flower bed. Some

wanted to raise vegetables, and, of course, I let them plant any seed they wished. The older children, girls or boys, help the younger ones. It is lots of fun. When the winter is fine, we are out here a good deal of the time, just working and talking."

And that is the way this man taught, letting children do things, and talk. He explained to me that he was not an "educated" man, and as I contradicted him, my eyes filled with tears.

Not educated? I wonder how many of us who call ourselves educated have a disciplined mind, and can call by name the forest birds in our vicinity?

Do we know the bird-notes when we hear them?

Can we, with pencil, outline the lines of oak, elm, maple, walnut, chestnut, hazel birch, or beech trees, so others familiar with these trees can recognize them?

Do we know by name, or on sight, the insects that fill the summer nights with melody? Do we know whether the katydid, cricket, and locust "sing" with mouth, wings or feet? Do we know what they feed upon, how long they live and what becomes of the tree-toad in winter?

Do we know how much a bushel of wheat weighs?

I wonder what it is to be educated? Here was a man seemingly sore smitten by the hand of fate, and yet whose heart was filled with sympathy and love. He had no quarrel, either with the world or destiny. He was childless that he might love all children and that his heart might go out to every living thing.

The trustees of the school did not take much interest in methods, I found, so they let the teacher have his way; and I have since been told that the best schools are those where the trustees or directors do not interfere with the teacher of the institution.

His collection of birds' eggs, fungi and forest leaves had been made, and I was shown outline drawings of all the leaves in the garden. This work of drawing a picture of the object led to a much closer observation the teacher thought.

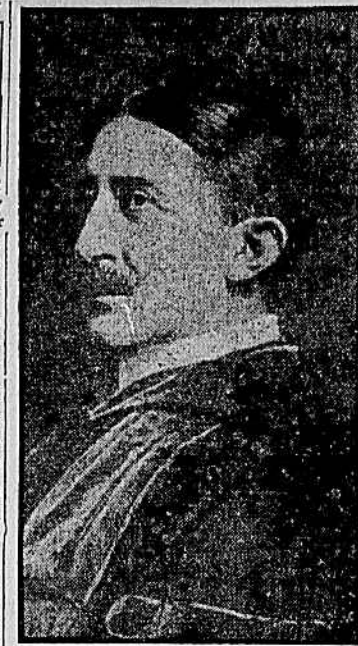
mit of the next grade being understood. This involves in most years only a fraction of the whole work covered. Arithmetic is almost the only subject that is so consecutive that one year's work absolutely depends on that of the previous year.

And even here the essentials are addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and percentage. It is less expensive and more humane to give special help to a child that he may be promoted than it is to degrade him with all the loss to the individual, the school and the community which is involved.

The objection raised is that this means lowering the standards. A high standard is one which secures the best and most effective and successful work from the pupil. Those standards are vicious and low which promote failure and discouragement. I know one teacher who for years has "failed" over half of each successive class by so-called "high standards."

That woman is responsible for the termination of the school career of hundreds of boys and girls who average up well both in effort and mental power. The trouble is with the standard. A man teaching boys to jump, who should put the stick at such a height that a considerable number failed and stopped trying, would not be regarded as maintaining high standards. It is his business to teach boys to jump—not to discourage them so that they will leave the field.

This army of failure, consisting of the 250,000 children who each year leave our city schools, having failed of graduation, may be largely recruited



PRESIDENT ALDERMAN, of University of Virginia.

into the army of success, those who graduate, by four measures:

(1) Having a genuine eight-year compulsory school law for the eight-year school.

(2) Having medical inspection of school children with adequate "follow-up" work by school nurses or teachers. This brings the rate of progress of the children having defects up to the normal. Adequate hygienic supervision of the school and its work largely does away with the 16 per cent. of those who drop out because of ill health.

(3) A complete school census and an adequate administration of attendance officers cut down all failures due to the fact that 25 per cent. of the children now attend school but three-quarters of the time.

(4) The course of study and school machinery must be adapted to the average that as many will go faster as go slower than the mass.

In a school system with 1,000 pupils entering each year and 83 per cent. promoted each year, there will be 830 who complete the first grade in one year; of this number 682 will go through the second grade in one year, 572 the third, 475 the fourth, 393 the fifth, 326 the sixth, 271 the seventh and 225 will graduate without having failed. A few will go faster than this, and about 50 will keep on in spite of one or more years of failure, so that eventually about 500 will be graduated each year. These are the present conditions in American city schools. In those systems that have changed these promotion rates to 95 per cent. or better, the figures are as follows:

950 complete the first year without failure.

903 complete the second year without failure.

858 complete the third year without failure.

815 complete the fourth year without failure.

744 complete the fifth year without failure.

735 complete the sixth year without failure.

698 complete the seventh year without failure.

663 complete the course without failure.

And it would be reasonable to expect that those who continue in spite of having failed only once in their course will nevertheless graduate.

This will give a total of 941—that is, 94 per cent.

These four measures do not increase the total expenditure for instruction in any respect. They decrease, not increase, the number of children in school at any one time, for children are promoted and graduated promptly. They give 94 per cent. of the children the important studies in the two upper years of the course, while at present only one-half of the children get these studies.

These measures stop the "blocking" in the lower grades, raise the health and efficiency standards of the whole body of pupils and teachers, and tend to establish the habit of success rather than the habit of failure in the pupils. This is of greater importance than anything in the course of study. It sends the children out into the world with hope rather than with discouragement.

The accomplishment of this result, the conversion of the army of failure into an addition to the army of success, is the second great achievement of the American city schools.

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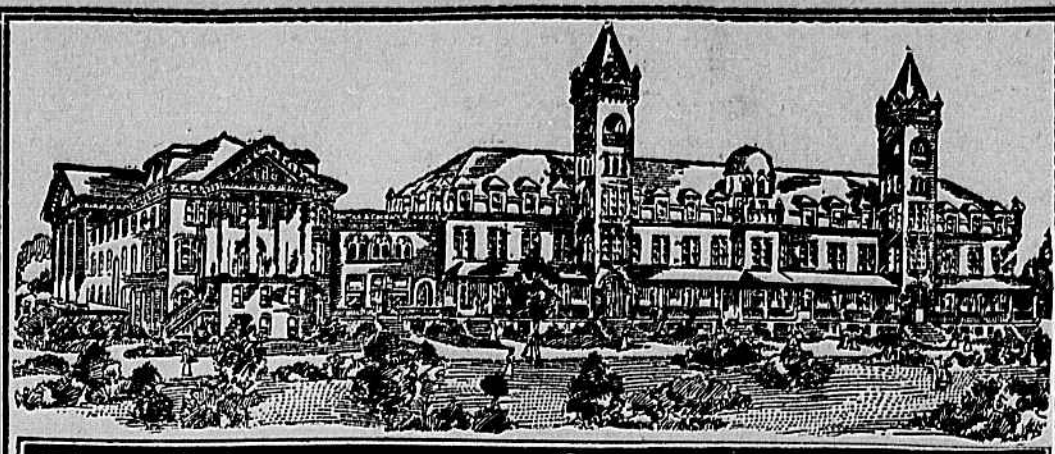
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